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JFK Aide Muzzled Me, Colonel Says

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A new charge of White House muzzling of military officers exploded in Miami today — this one swirling around last April's Cuban invasion debacle.

A retired air force colonel, who formerly was U. S. air attache in Cuba and played a behind-the-scenes role here in the invasion aftermath, charged that a "scared" White House aide had suppressed him and his assistant from informing other Air Force missions on the details of the Cuban fiasco.

Col. Fred D. Stevers, who headed an Air Force mission office here after diplomatic relations were broken with Cuba, said the suppression was applied by Richard N. Goodwin under threat of forfeiting their military careers.

The 30-year-old Goodwin, who formerly was President Kennedy's special White House adviser on Latin American affairs, was sworn in yesterday as a deputy assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs.



GOODWIN

Goodwin, who according to hemisphere critics began on-the-job-training as a Latin American "expert" after President Kennedy took office, played a key Washington part in the Cuban invasion planning — with the Central Intelligence Agency — and in post-invasion relations with Cuban exile leaders.

Col. Stevers said that during the first week of last June he and his assistant, Maj. Robert Van Horn, attended the annual conference of U. S. air attaches and mission chiefs to Latin America. The meeting was in Panama.

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"At this meeting I was scheduled to talk on the Cuban situation," he said.

"However upon my arrival at the Caribbean Air Command I was informed by a general from USAF Intelligence in Washington that I wouldn't be permitted to say anything concerning the invasion.

"This was despite the fact that these officers (attending the conference), above all others, had the need and right to know what had happened and why. They are serving in countries where situations could develop like they did in Cuba.

"This general officer stated that an official investigation was being made by Gen. (Maxwell) Taylor in Washington and the facts would be revealed at the 'proper time.'

"Now I know, as I suspected

then, that this was just suppression. The facts still haven't been revealed.

"I later learned that the orders came from Richard Goodwin at the White House.

"Upon the return of my assistant and myself to Miami, our secretary informed us that our telephone had been dis-

connected 'on orders from Washington.' "

Stevers recalled that shortly afterward he was notified by the Central Intelligence Agency that Air Force headquarters in Washington had ordered the Miami office closed and there should be "absolutely no further business conducted."

"We subsequently learned that Goodwin apparently was scared that what we knew here and some of our records might be disclosed," he added. "We had been told by the CIA to get our records in order and forward them right away to Washington.

"Next, we were ordered to Washington for a protracted period on orders of Goodwin.

"Our headquarters advised that I was on leave and could not be readily reached. Maj. Van Horn went to Washington and cooled his heels in a sort of 'outer office arrest' for three weeks.

"He was questioned by Goodwin only once in that period, and then very briefly. But Goodwin put the fear into him in making it plain not to talk about the Cuban invasion.

"A month later he (Maj. Van Horn) was transferred to Mexico and I retired July 1.

"In the service, my chances for any effective activity had come practically to zero, as in my opinion, have all the other military in the Latin American attache and mission fields."

Goodwin could not be reached for comment on the charges.

Stevers said he considered the past six months a sufficient period to declassify his statements and charges.

"I am not proud in any sense of being part of this distasteful Cuban business," he said.

"With only a modest effort on our part, in either the early stages, the middle or later part, a complete victory could have been gained for Cubans, the U. S. and freedom-loving peoples everywhere.

"I was on duty station in Havana from June 15, 1960 to Jan. 4, 1961, at which time I made the last flight with embassy records and personnel to Key West."

(This was when the United States and Cuba severed diplomatic relations).

"I was, for the most part, an unhappy observer to this portion of the Communist take-over. The Americans were told, 'just hold still now and we will take care of you later — everything is going to come out all right.'

"Although very apprehensive about this, I thought those wiser

than I have a plan for success which will be revealed at the right time — despite appearances, surely we could not be aiding in the enslavement of six million Cubans, our closest friends in Latin America.

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"The last half of 1960, dedicated and patriotic members of the Cuban underground gave their lives in ever-increasing numbers in the counter-revolutionary movement.

"Initially, with some U. S. support, they set up several fronts in the mountains. Cubans flocked to those areas. The only limiting factor was the amount of support.

"Castro threw everything he had at the principal front in the Escambray. Raul Castro went there and failed. Che Guevara stated he would never return to Havana until every counter-revolutionary was dead. He herded his militia up the hills and the patriots mowed them down.